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How to argue about Aristotle about practical reason

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Abstract

In this paper, I consider Aristotle's views in relation to the Humean theory of motivation (HTM). I distinguish three principles which HTM is committed to, the 'No Desires' principle, the 'Motivation Out – Desire In' principle, and the 'Desire Out – Desire In' principle. To reject HTM one only needs to reject one of these principles. I argue that while it is plausible to think Aristotle accepts the first two principles, there are some grounds for thinking that he might reject the third.

Keywords

Aristotle – Motivation – Desire – Reason - Metaethics

I Introduction and the Humean Theory of Motivation

The title of my paper is intended to put one in mind of R. J. Wallace's article 'How to argue about practical reason' in *Mind* in 1990, in which Wallace attempted to work out what was really at stake in competing Humean and anti-Humean (for the latter, in Wallace's mouth, read primarily 'Kantian') accounts of motivation. Ultimately, I want to work out whether Aristotle can sensibly be said to advance a Humean theory of motivation or not, as I think getting clear on this will be instructive not only with respect to understanding his views but also potentially of interest for contemporary debates on the matter. But before we can begin to try to work this out, we first need to establish what would *count* as establishing it.

There has been a long-standing debate about whether or not Aristotle was a 'Humean' about practical reason. Unfortunately, all too often it has not been made precise what would count as establishing this one way or the other or, indeed, why it should matter. For instance, in a recent discussion, Jessica Moss asked, in her title: 'Was Aristotle a Humean?' Faced with such a question, one might not unreasonably reply: 'Was Aristotle a Humean *about what?*' or 'What do you mean by 'Humean'?' And the opening lines of her paper perhaps don't illuminate her question quite as much as one would like. She writes:

How much power does Aristotle grant to practical reason? He seems to characterize it as purely instrumental: as on Hume's view, our passions and desires set our goals, and reason is relegated to working out how to achieve them. And yet the whole tenor of his discussion of practical reason, and in particular of its virtue, *phronesis*, seems distinctively un-Humean: practical reason has an authority and an ethical significance that no Humean would allow. What then is his view? (2014, 221)

There is a clear allusion here to the thought that the Humean reading would resonate with Hume's celebrated claim that reason is 'slave' to the passions, and thereby assign reason a purely instrumental role, whereas an anti-Humean reading would, presumably, provide reason with a non-instrumental role, such that it can *set* our ends or goals (she later contrasts the Humean reading with a 'Kantian' view of practical reason, according to which 'we reach our goals through reasoning, and the job of nonrational passion is simply to follow along' (2014, 222)). Even so, there are still several Humean theories in the vicinity that are, I think, worth distinguishing.

In contemporary metaethics there are (at least) two central, but importantly different, Humean theories about practical reason. The ***Humean theory of motivation (HTM)*** concerns the conditions that are required for an agent's being motivated. HTM can very generally be characterised as committed to the view that there are two fundamentally distinct kinds of state necessary for motivation, cognitions and explanatorily basic conations (desires), and (so) maintaining that cognitions are unable to account for motivation alone. (I shall specify HTM more precisely shortly.) By contrast, ***The Humean theory of***

normative reasons (HTN), or *The Humean theory of Instrumental Rationality* (as it is also sometimes called), concerns what constitutes an agent's normative reasons, that is, what makes it the case that an agent *has* a reason to do something (whether or not she is motivated to act that way). A Humean theory, in this sense, amounts to the view that an agent's normative reasons must be traceable via 'a deliberative route', or perhaps 'a sound deliberative route' as Bernard Williams maintains¹, to the agent's basic desiderative states or dispositions, the agent's 'subjective motivational set', as Williams again puts it.²

HTM and HTN are evidently distinct. One could (perhaps a little peculiarly) hold an anti-Humean theory of motivation, such that beliefs are capable of motivating us on their own, but nonetheless think that normative reasons must be grounded in the agent's desires, and one could (perhaps less peculiarly) think that explanatorily basic conative states are required for motivation, and so endorse HTM, but nonetheless think that normative reasons can apply to us regardless of our desiderative states.³

Now, I suspect that many would think that the debate about Aristotle that is being alluded to in the quote from Moss above doesn't neatly fall into either of these views.⁴ Instead, it will be said to concern what we might call the ***Humean theory of practical rationality (HTR)***, that is, a theory about the

¹ Williams 1995, 36. The two formulations are not straightforwardly equivalent, since the latter introduces a notion of normativity not in the former. Williams (1995, 36) will embrace this, but others see the normativity inherent in instrumental reason as something that can't simply be had for nothing; see e.g. Korsgaard (1997).

² Williams 1981, 102. Although it should be noted that some Kantians have argued that their rationalist accounts can meet this 'internalist requirement' (as Korsgaard puts it) while remaining rationalist (see esp. Korsgaard (1996)).

³ The two would only coincide if one thought that we only have normative reason to do what we are in fact motivated to do. But, besides being a very odd view to advance (we couldn't say that the person who wants a gin and tonic, but mistakenly thinks the petrol in her gin bottle is gin, has a (prudential or at least instrumental) reason not to drink the stuff), the two theories would still be distinct, since one would be making a claim about what the agent has reason to do, and the other about what she is motivated to do. I should also flag that the distinction between normative and motivating reasons isn't itself entirely uncontroversial; see e.g. Dancy (1995 and 2000).

⁴ For some references to the literature on this debate, see Moss (2014, 222 and n3).

instrumental nature of practical reason and its ability (or lack of it) to set the agent's ends. HTR can be generally contrasted with an anti-Humean theory in so far as Humeans insist that practical reason is restricted to working out means to pre-given ends (set e.g. by desire and character), whereas anti-Humeans think reason is capable of setting ends in its own right.⁵

Is HTR distinct from both HTN and HTM? HTN and HTR do indeed seem independent. One could think that normative reasons hold of agents regardless of their desires, and so reject HTN, but still nonetheless think that the role of practical reason is to work out means to pre-given ends (regardless of whether those ends are in fact choiceworthy) and so embrace HTR. And one could think (perhaps a little peculiarly) that normative reasons must be grounded in the agent's desires, and so embrace HTN, even though one thought that practical reason could itself set an agent's ends. (Such a view would maintain that reason can set our ends independently of our desires and character, but what we really have reason to do must be grounded in our desires).

What about HTM and HTR? If these were also entirely independent, one could coherently hold that (ia) beliefs are capable of motivating us independently of our explanatorily basic desires (thereby rejecting HTM), even though (ib) reason is restricted to working out means to our given ends (as those are set by desire and character) (thereby embracing HTR). And one could also coherently think that (iia) explanatory basic conative states are necessary (alongside cognitions) for motivation (thereby embracing HTM), but nonetheless think (iib) that reason can set our ends independently of our desires and so play a non-instrumental role (thereby rejecting HTR).

⁵ Moss calls her own reading 'quasi-Humean' in her 2014. She there claims that Aristotle thinks reason can grasp ends, but not *set* ends. In calling this 'quasi-Humean', rather than 'strictly' or 'purely' Humean' (her expressions), she appears to be claiming that reason, on Hume's view, cannot even grasp the end that passion motivates the agent to pursue. That would be a peculiar view for Hume to advance since any sort of deliberation about how to achieve an end would appear to require reason to at least *recognise* the end in question as one that has been set by passion. In her 2011 and 2012 Moss advocates a reading of Aristotle that is anti-Humean by my lights (and indeed by her own: 2011, 251); see, n34 below.

But it isn't so clear that the above conjunctions ((iia) & (iib) and (iia) & (iib)) are coherent. If belief is capable of motivating us all on its own (=ia) then, contra (ib), it is hard to see how it can be restricted to working out means to ends set by desire or character. Such a restriction would undermine its claim to be able to motivate *all on its own*. And if reason can set our ends independently of desire/character (=iia) then, contra (iib), it is hard to see how an explanatory basic conative state is also necessary for motivation. Such a need would seem to undermine reason's ability to be truly independent in setting ends.

This suggests that HTM and HTR aren't entirely independent from each other. Granted they do have different nuances. HTR is explicitly couched in terms of the (non-)instrumentality of reason, whereas the instrumentality in HTM is only tacit – via explanatorily basic desires (see DO-DI and n10 below). And HTR speaks of ends (or 'goals') being set by reason or desire/character, whereas HTM speaks of being motivated.⁶ But these nuances aside, one can't, it seems, reject one of theories without also rejecting the other.

My approach in this paper will be to tackle head on the question of whether or not Aristotle embraces HTM. I hope this will prove interesting in its own right and, given HTM's connection to HTR, potentially help us with the latter as well. For, as we shall, focussing on HTM will cast a different light on many of the debates that have been addressed through the eyes of HTR. For example, the putative limitations on deliberation, and the alleged instrumental character of reason, which Moss and others spend much time discussing, are more prominent if we focus on HTR rather than HTM, since the latter makes a claim about the role of beliefs or cognitive states in motivation more generally, not deliberation as such (although of

⁶ HTN could also speak of *normative* ends being set, but this isn't the sense in which HTR intends. HTR isn't concerned with what makes an end one we ought to pursue (and so about normative reasons), but about what sets the ends we are in fact motivated to pursue. Even the vicious are intended to have ends in the relevant sense (see e.g. Moss 2014, 239) and yet Aristotle wouldn't accept that vicious agents ought to act viciously (e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 8, 1169a15-16). (It has been argued that Aristotle's vicious agent must also have a desire for her normative good (e.g. for what is in fact good for her overall), see Grönroos (2015a, 2015b) but only by insisting that such an end is 'unarticulated' in her and insufficient to guide actions (2015a, 162). (For what it's worth, I would reject this conception of Aristotle's vicious agent, but I can't argue the point here.))

course deliberation may lead to beliefs, and so has found its way into the discussion of HTM). The overall hope is that my discussion will open a new way of arguing about Aristotle via explicit consideration of his view in relation to HTM.

To proceed, we first need to state more precisely what we take the Humean theory of motivation to be committed to. Most are agreed that this theory is not attempting to characterise *Hume's* theory of motivation, not least because that account is itself a matter significant dispute. (Hence it makes sense for a number of scholars to raise the question whether or not Hume was a Humean about motivation.⁷) But even liberated of textual analysis of Hume, the commitments of HTM are somewhat controversial in contemporary metaethics. On my view, as I mentioned, HTM can very generally be characterised as maintaining that there are two fundamentally distinct kinds of state necessary for motivation, cognitions and explanatorily basic conations (desires), and (so) maintaining that cognitions are unable to account for motivation alone. More specifically, we can see HTM as committed to at least the following three principles (I shall elaborate on them a bit more, and on what I think is really at stake in them, in due course):

No Besires principle (No B-Ds): Beliefs and desires are essentially distinct kinds of state. There cannot be states ('besires' as they've been termed⁸) which are somehow at once essentially both beliefs and desires; states that could not, even in principle, be decomposed or resolved into distinct beliefs and desires.⁹

⁷ See e.g. Persson (1997) and, for many more references and extensive discussion, Radcliffe (2018, Ch. 2).

⁸ Originally by Altham (1986, 284).

⁹ The key for the besire theorist is that there are states that *are* both beliefs and desires. HTM does not deny that there can be states that essentially *involve* beliefs and desires – indeed, motivation itself would be just such a state. But HTM maintains that any such state is *composite*, that is, is made up of distinct beliefs and desires that could, at least in principle, come apart. Some philosophers think of besires as having two different contents, a belief-based content *that p* and desire-based content *to q* (see e.g. Little 1997). The Humean would query whether such a state isn't really decomposable into distinct beliefs and desires.

Motivation-Out Desire-In principle (MO-DI): Motivation is not possible without a desire; desires are necessary for motivation.

Desire-Out Desire-In principle (DO-DI): An agent's desires are either basic desiderative states or desiderative dispositions, and so not themselves ultimately explicable in terms of other non-desiderative states of the agent, or they are traceable back to such basic desiderative states or dispositions via other cognitive states and desires.¹⁰

In order to establish a cognitive basis for motivation and reject the idea that two fundamentally distinct states are necessary for motivation we need only deny one of these principles. If there are singular states that are both beliefs and desires at the same time and not further dividable then we won't need two fundamentally distinct states for motivation and so long as one sees the world aright one will be motivated.¹¹ Similarly, if desires aren't required for motivation (i.e. we reject MO-DI) or if any desire that is required for motivation is explanatorily 'downstream', as I shall put it, of the cognition that in fact does the motivational work (i.e. we reject DO-DI) then a cognitive basis for motivation is in the offing.

A key culprit for confusion about HTM in contemporary metaethics is Michael Smith, since in spite of calling his view 'The Humean Theory of Motivation' (1994, Chapter 4), his whole solution to what he calls 'the moral problem', roughly, a motivational puzzle about how beliefs can bring about motivation on their

¹⁰ Cf. Wallace (1990, 370); Sinhababu (2009, 465). I'll return to their formulations of DO-DI later. It is in DO-DI that there is a tacit instrumentality to HTM, in so far as it appeals to explanatorily basic desires and to occurrent desires being *traceable back* to such desires.

¹¹ Cf. McNaughton (1988, 109): '... the awareness of a moral requirement is a state which must be thought of, Janus-like, as having directions of fit facing both ways. The agent's conception reveals to him both that the world is a certain way and that he must change it'.

own in rational agents, hinges on him rejecting DO-DI.¹² R. J. Wallace, in his 'How to argue ...' paper, saw that DO-DI was crucial for distinguishing rationalist views (like his own Kantian view) from Humean views about motivation. And I, like some others (e.g. Sinhababu 2009, 465-466), agree that DO-DI is fundamental for HTM, since without it we could still have a cognitivist account of motivation that accepts the other two principles: desires that are distinct existences might be necessary for motivation but nonetheless themselves be generated by cognitions.

It's worthwhile briefly noting why defending an anti-Humean account has seemed so significant to some. One reason is that a cognitivist basis for motivation has been thought required (though not itself sufficient, of course) for prudential and moral realism. We have a chance, at least, of reasoning with you to change your *viewpoint*, whereas if there is an ineliminable desiderative or non-cognitive element to motivation, that can't be explained in terms of a prior belief or cognitive state, then it may seem, as Nagel wrote, that 'if one lacks the relevant desire, there is nothing more to be said' (1970: 28). Hence, if you pardon the irony of my putting it this way, there has been a strong desire for some to put motivation on a cognitive footing.¹³ (For what it's worth, I might say up front that I reject the idea that prudential and moral realism requires a cognitivist account of motivation.)

II Arguing about Aristotle

¹² In his earlier paper 'The Humean Theory of Motivation' in 1987 in *Mind* he did appear to commit to DO-DI. He claimed that beliefs and desires have different 'directions of fit' (section 6), that teleological considerations suggest that desires have a direction of fit with which the world must match (section 7), and finally that for any putative cognitive state that would bring about a desire, the teleological argument would iterate: 'the state that motivates the desire must itself be a desire' (59). But, significantly, this argument drops out of Smith's later presentation of his Humean theory in *The Moral Problem* (1994, Ch. 4). And in a later paper he explicitly rejects DO-DI (1997, 100n.18).

¹³ Reasoning with you to change your viewpoint will obviously be less significant for those who adopt quasi-perceptual cognitivist theories – on McDowell's view, for instance, one may have to seek to get the person to *see* the world differently (see e.g. 1978, 21).

The suggestion is that considering Aristotle's views directly in terms of the above three principles of HTM might help to bring some order to the widely divergent accounts of Aristotle's account of motivation in the literature. I also think, as I shall indicate, it might stimulate further thought about some of those principles themselves and so potentially contribute to contemporary discussions. I should perhaps emphasise in advance that I approach the investigation into Aristotle's views with a genuinely open mind. Although I think I advocate HTM, I remain open to the idea that Aristotle doesn't.

2.1 Aristotle and MO-DI. MO-DI states that desires are required for motivation, that is, that one cannot be motivated to do something without a desire. The precise relation between the desire that is putatively required and the action that is motivated requires elaboration and specification, of course, but I shall not pursue that here. For the key point is fairly simple. MO-DI is intended to rule out the idea that beliefs (or cognitive states more generally) can motivate agents without a desire being involved at all. (It doesn't, however, preclude the idea that the desire that is required for motivation could be derived from or explanatorily downstream of some other cognitive state – that is the role of DO-DI in HTM – all it does is insist on the necessity of desire for motivation.)

In contemporary metaethics, those who have argued against MO-DI have often appealed to phenomenology. Sometimes we seem to be moved by the thought that some action is required of us, or is our duty to perform, without desiring to perform it. Think, perhaps, of cleaning out an aged-relative's bedpan or going to the dentist for a filling.¹⁴

In response, the advocate of MO-DI will generally try to provide a notion of 'desire' according to which all intentional actions count as desired. We might, for example, take 'desire' to signify any 'pro attitude' towards an action or state of affairs, and then suggest there are pro attitudes in the cases in question, such

¹⁴ Platts (1979, 256) and Shafer-Landau (2003, 123) have rejected MO-DI. Scanlon (1998, 39-40) and Barry (2007; 2010) can also be understood this way.

as wanting to help the aged-relative or the benefit of alleviating the toothache.¹⁵ Alternatively, we might take 'desire' to include both 'positive desire' and 'aversion' (Sinhababu, 2009), and suggest that in the cases in question we are motivated by an aversion to consequences of failing to clean out the bedpan or going for the dental procedure.

If we turn to whether Aristotle accepts MO-DI, I think it fair to say that this principle is probably the least controversial of the three to ascribe to him, in so far as he evidently identifies the *orektikon*, the capacity of desire, as the capacity owing to which we are moved in *De Anima* III 9-10.¹⁶ Of course, Aristotle is considering locomotion here, not motivation as such, but even so, since he is (i) considering *voluntary* locomotion (*An.* III 9, 432b16-17) and (ii) maintains that the capacity for desire, in direct contrast to cognition or thought, is ultimately responsible for locomotion (*An.* III 10, 433a21-26, 433a31-433b1), the text surely points in the direction of MO-DI (even without trying to work out how motivation relates to voluntary locomotion) since it suggests that he would be inclined to think that cognitions cannot motivate agents to move *without* a desire being involved.

I suppose *De Motu Animalium* 6 might be thought to provide counter-evidence. For here, again considering what moves animals, Aristotle lists various cognitive capacities (reasoning (*dianoia*), *phantasia*, and perception) and conative capacities (*boulêsis*, *thumos*, *epithumia*) as movers of animals and then reduces these to just thought (*nous*) and desire (*orexis*) on the ground that the former are discriminatory capacities (*kritika*) and the latter are species of desire, *orexis*. (He also mentions preferential choice, *prohairesis*, which he thinks straddles both reason and desire). The fact that Aristotle here leaves thought

¹⁵ 'Pro attitude' was first introduced by Nowell-Smith (1954, 112); see also, esp. Davidson (1980, 3-4) and Schueler (1995, Ch. 1).

¹⁶ E.g. '... it is a capacity of the soul of this kind, that which is called desire, that produces movement ...' (433a31-433b1); 'That which produces movement will be one in kind, the *orektikon* as such ...' (433b10-11), 'in so far as the animal is capable of desire so far is it capable of moving itself ...' (433b27-28). Contra Richardson (1997), it is clear that Aristotle means to identify the *orektikon* (rather than the *orekton*, the object of desire) as the capacity responsible for animal locomotion. I don't think his doing so has the consequences that Richardson thinks, though. I discuss this in my MS 'Aristotle on the role of desire in locomotion'.

as a distinct mover, might be taken to suggest that he thinks cognitions alone can motivate us, and so rejects MO-DI.

But I think we can resist this suggestion and take *MA* to be filled out by *An.* III 9-10 rather than conflict with it. In *MA* Aristotle claims that it is not any kind of thought that can move us, but only thoughts concerned with what can be done (700b24-25). In *An.* III 9-10 he makes the same claim (433a14) as part of his argument that ultimately concludes that desire alone is the mover, but there he explains that even when we are moved in accordance with thought we are moved in accordance with desire. At the end of *An.* III 9, he had provided a consideration that seemed to show that thought could move us even contrary to desire, namely, the notion that enkratic agents act in accordance with their thoughts against their appetites. But, in correcting this *phainomenon* in *An.* III 10, Aristotle points out that even the enkratic agent is moved in accordance with *some* desire (*orexis*):

It is clear that thought (*nous*) does not move without *orexis*, for *boulêsis* ('wish') is an *orexis* and when one is moved in accordance with thought, one is also moved in accordance with *boulêsis*. (*An.* III 10, 433a22-25)

Thought can be deemed capable of moving us, as *MA* maintains, but even when it does we are still moved in accordance with one kind of *orexis*, namely, a *boulêsis* (sometimes translated by 'wish'). Thus, the notion that thought can move us does not jeopardise Aristotle's view that desires are necessary for locomotion. The same idea, *mutatis mutandis*, evidently applies to *phantasia* too. As Aristotle explicitly notes: 'And when *phantasia* produces movement it does not do so without desire (*ἀνευ ὁρέξεως*)' (*An.* III 10, 433a20-21).¹⁷

¹⁷ The other cognitive state on Aristotle's list in *MA*, sc. perception, is a little trickier. In *An.* III 9 Aristotle rules out perception as the mover on the ground that there are many animals that possess perception, but which are stationary and unmoving throughout, and yet nature does nothing without reason and so would have given such animals the parts to do so if perception were the mover (432b19-26). However, such a consideration (if valid) wouldn't rule out perception playing a role in locomotion in animals that do have the parts that facilitate movement. And it could be this that *MA* is alluding to. Insofar as perception can

Thus, the notion that cognitions can move us does not jeopardise Aristotle's thought that desires are necessary for locomotion. MO-DI is surely on the cards.

2.2 Aristotle and the No B-Ds principle. What about the No B-Ds principle? The No B-Ds principle rules out their being states which are somehow at once essentially both beliefs and desires; states that could not, even in principle, be decomposed or resolved into distinct beliefs and desires (see also n9 above). Jimmy Altham called such (putative) states 'besires' (1986, 284). In so doing, he was characterising John McDowell's position in his 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?' and McDowell's view in that paper can, I think, reasonably be thought of as denying the No-B-D's principle. McDowell wants to deny that states of the will and cognitive states need be 'distinct existences', and correspondingly reject the notion that the world is motivationally inert. Grasping an 'ert' world, on McDowell's view, simply *is* to be motivated accordingly. Besires thus do appear to be in play.¹⁸

A key *proponent* of the view (without using the terminology) that Aristotle advances besires and, interestingly, unitary states that are at once perceptions *and* desires – 'persires' we might call them – is David Charles (esp. 2006). Charles maintains that Aristotle thinks that 'perceiving A as pleasant', which appears to be a cognitive state, is *identical* with 'sensually desiring A', a conative state, and maintains there is really only 'one type of activity' in play in such a scenario, which can be described in different ways. That looks like a persire. Charles applies the same line of thought to beliefs, and so ascribes 'besires' to Aristotle as well.

A key piece of evidence Charles appeals to is a complicated passage in *An.* III 7. Although I find Charles' reading fascinating, I don't think the text demands it. However, as this text is complicated, and addressing

play such a role, however, it seems clear that Aristotle would apply the same restriction to it in *An.* III 9-10 as he does to *phantasia* and thought: perception can't move without desire.

¹⁸ See also McNaughton (1988, e.g. at 109), Little (1997) and, more recently, Swartzner (2013).

it quickly becomes fairly thorny, I shall reserve discussion of it for an Appendix.¹⁹ Instead, let me provide a couple of considerations, drawn from elsewhere, that perhaps suggest that Aristotle would *reject* besires.

First, consider again the passage from *MA* 6 we have already looked at. Insofar as Aristotle here groups cognitive states together as *kritika* (discriminative capacities), and thereby suggests that the mark of the cognitive is discerning or distinguishing something (he makes a similar claim at the beginning of *An.* III 3 and *An.* III 9), and insofar as he groups these states together as *distinct from* desires, that naturally suggests that he views the states as different *in kind*. This isn't jeopardised by the notion we glossed from *An.* III 10 that when one is moved in accordance with thought one is also moved in accordance with desire, since that evidently doesn't entail the *identity* of the moving thought with the desire (contra Charles 2006, 31-32). Nor is it jeopardised by the fact, as we saw, that Aristotle claims that *prohairesis* straddles both thought and desire. After all, even the advocate of HTM, who accepts the No B-Ds principle, thinks that some states essentially *involve* both beliefs and desires. Indeed, the advocate of HTM claims that *motivation* is just such a state: one cannot be motivated without both beliefs and desires, where these are different kinds of state. So long as, though, the beliefs and desires that go to make up the state are distinct existences, such that one could in principle have one without the other – that we don't identify the beliefs and the desires – they will not count as besires. *Prohairesis* can be made up or composed of beliefs and desires without being besires.

Here is a second consideration. In contemporary metaethics, some philosophers have tried to argue against the existence of besires by appealing to the notion that beliefs and desires essentially have different 'directions of fit'.²⁰ Beliefs aim to fit the world, such that it is a failing in a belief if it fails to match

¹⁹ Tuozzo (1994) also appeals to *An.* III 7 in his attempt to argue that desire, for Aristotle, 'is a special sort of cognition'.

²⁰ For discussion, see e.g. Platts (1979, 279), Smith (1987, 54; 1994, 111-115), Little (1997), and Tenenbaum (2006). Several philosophers have argued that the distinction does not hold up under scrutiny; see Humberstone (1992) and esp. Frost (2014). The notion of directions of fit is usually traced back to Anscombe's discussion in *Intention* (1957, 56), although Frost argues Anscombe has been misunderstood.

the world; whereas failing to fit the world isn't a failure in the desire, instead desires aim to change the world to fit them. Since beliefs and desires have different directions of fit - the argument goes - there can't be states that are both. Or, rather, any state that appears to be such – such as *being motivated* itself - can in principle be broken up into beliefs and desires with different directions of fit.

Interestingly, while it doesn't quite match this, one passage in Aristotle makes a related point. In *EN* VI 2 he writes:

What affirmation and negation are in thinking (ἐν διανοίᾳ), pursuit and avoidance are in desire (ὄρεξις); so that since ethical virtue is a state concerned with preferential choice, and preferential choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right (δεῖ δὲ αὐτὰ μὲν τὸν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν), if the preferential choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue what the former asserts ... [and we get] truth in agreement with right desire (ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ). (1139a21-26, 31)

Aristotle appears to be drawing a distinction between two types of state, thinking and desire, and their corresponding appraisal. Thinking (*dianoia*) can be said to affirm or deny something (of something) (see also esp. *De Interpretatione* 6, 17a25-6), and is accordingly appraisable in terms of truth or falsity, whereas desiderative states can be said to pursue or avoid something and are accordingly appraisable in terms of correctness or incorrectness. In fact, presumably correctness/incorrectness is the broader category of which truth/falsity is a sub-category (hence the commonplace that beliefs will be *correct* if they are true). Beliefs or chains of reasoning will be correct or incorrect in so far as they are true or false, but desires aren't literally true or false, although they can be correct or incorrect depending on whether or not they direct the agent to pursue or avoid certain actions - 'correct' insofar as they motivate agents to pursue what they really *ought* to pursue and 'incorrect' insofar as they fail to do so.²¹

²¹ As this suggests, Aristotle advocates some kind of ethical realism. He thinks that the good person not only has different motivations from the bad person, but that the good person *gets it right* ('the good man differs from others most by seeing the truth in each class of things, being as it were the norm and the measure of them' (*EN* III 4, 1113a32-33; cf. *Eudemian Ethics* VII 2,

It is worth noting that in terms of their ultimate *appraisal* this would mean that beliefs and desires have the *same* direction of fit: they are both correct insofar as they match the ‘world’, which amounts to *being true* for beliefs and *being good or choiceworthy* for desires. But that similarity is grounded in a more basic *difference of fit*. Thought *affirms or denies*, whereas desire *pursues or avoids*, and if we are to form a (good) preferential choice the (right) desire must *pursue* what the (true) thought *asserts*. Beliefs and desires, then, seem to be fundamentally different states, on Aristotle’s view: the former are concerned with affirmation/denial, the latter with pursuit/avoidance.

If so, this counts against the *besire* reading of his view. For even when referring to a state that combines beliefs/thoughts and desires, namely, preferential choice, Aristotle keeps a sharp distinction between their relative roles. Preferential choices, it seems, in line with what we proposed earlier, are *composed of or incorporate* distinct thoughts and desires – an asserting thought and a pursuing desire – rather than form some new *sui generis* state that simply *is* both a desire and a thought. Decomposability seems to be accepted.

2.3 Aristotle and DO-DI. DO-DI insists that explanatorily basic desires are required for motivation. The key for this principle is that at some stage in the explanation, a desire that is not itself brought about or explained by a cognition is required for motivation. (I shall return to issues connected with the formulation of DO-DI below.) Many of those who advance anti-Humean accounts of motivation accept both MO-DI and the No B-Ds principle, and instead reject DO-DI. In contemporary metaethics there are several different ways philosophers have attempted to reject DO-DI. They’ve held: (1) that beliefs or cognitive states can *generate* desires and so generate motivation (at least in rational agents); (2) that any desire that is

1235b18-1236a10; *EE* III 1, 1228b17-19; *EN* X 5, 1176a15-19). Of course, this still leaves open how the ‘truth’ in question is to be constructed, and what it actually amounts to (and how the good man *is* the norm and measure of it). For an exploration of Aristotle’s moral realism, see e.g. Charles (1995).

required for motivation is merely *consequentially ascribed* owing to the fact of motivation; and (3) that desiring and being motivated *are the same state*.²²

It is probably fair to say that in so far as we can place their discussions in my framework most of those who reject the notion that Aristotle advocates HTM would maintain that he rejects DO-DI. In fact, though, one central disputed topic in this area seems to me to somewhat of a red herring. I refer to the fact, suggested by the quotation from Moss I provided at the beginning, that *phronesis* has some important bearing on this question. As Moss notes (2011; 2014), a number of commentators have appealed to various features about *phronesis* in support of the view that Aristotle thinks that practical reason can set ends (thereby supporting an anti-Humean reading, as Moss characterises that). For instance, it is noted that Aristotle distinguishes *phronesis* from mere cleverness (*EN* VI 12, 1144a23-29), where the latter is closer to efficiency in instrumental reasoning; it is emphasised that Aristotle ‘endows *phronesis* with enormous ethical import’, as Moss puts it (2014, 222), in so far as ‘without it, one cannot have any of the character virtues, and with it one has them all’ (*EN* VI 13); and it is noted that some passages appear to attribute to *phronesis* the capacity of setting the goal, indeed, in one he appears to claim that *phronesis* is ‘true supposition of the end’ (*EN* VI 9, 1142b31-32). On the other side, Humean interpreters emphasise a number of passages in which Aristotle claims the virtue makes the ends right, *phronesis* the things that contribute to (*pros*) it (e.g. *EN* VI 12, 1144a7-9; VI 13, 1145a4-6). Overall, the dispute has led to a large literature in which advocates from both camps attempt to accommodate the (apparently) conflicting texts.²³

²²(1) seems to be advocated by Kantians, such as Korsgaard (1996) and Wallace (2006). Smith (1994, esp. Ch. 3 and Ch. 5) also appears to advocate this view (he explicitly rejects DO-DI in his 1997 (100n18)). See also Darwall (1983, 39-40) and Foot (1995, 13). (2) seems to be the view advocated by Nagel (1970, 29-30) and Schiffer (1976). McDowell (1978) could also perhaps be construed as holding this view, rather than the *besire* version above. (3) seems to be view of Dancy (1993, 19-20; 2000, 86-88) and Alvarez (2010, 119-120).

²³ See e.g. Fortenbaugh (1964); Irwin (1975); Sorabji (1973-4); Smith (1996); Moss (2011; 2012, Chs. 7-8; 2014).

My problem with appealing to *phronesis* in this context is that however we ultimately understand Aristotle's claim that virtue sets the ends and *phronesis* the things *pros* ends, it is going to be hard to construe *phronesis* as an undiluted rational process (i.e. unmixed with elements of desire) in the way that seems required for it to be germane to establishing whether or not Aristotle advances DO-DI. For he is very explicit that, strictly speaking, *phronesis* cannot exist without character virtue. ('It is clear', he writes, 'that it is impossible to be practically wise without being good' (VI 12, 1144a36-1144b1); again: 'it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without *phronesis* (VI 13, 1144b30-31) – where it is clear in context that 'being good' means possessing the character virtues.) But then it is not going to be easy to construe *phronesis* as an undiluted cognitive process that *brings about* a conative state, as the anti-Humean would maintain, nor as a purely rational process that is itself incapable of doing so, as the Humean wants. The suspicion is indeed that if Aristotle had to demarcate a purely rational process in this domain it would be 'cleverness', not *phronesis* (cf. especially VI 12, 1144a23-29; VII 10, 1152a10-14), but it is unlikely that cleverness will motivate anything on its own, since *it* in fact *does* seem close to instrumental reasoning (cleverness, Aristotle claims, 'is such as to be able to do the things that tend towards the mark *we have set before ourselves*, and to hit it' (VI 12, 1144a24-25, my emphasis)), and therefore won't itself support an anti-Humean reading either.

If focussing on the *phronimos* to address DO-DI is a bit of a red herring, it has at least helped reveal what we *do* need to establish in order to reject DO-DI, namely, a state that is un-contentiously cognitive needs to be shown to generate a desire or motivation without it tapping into, as we might put it, or drawing on some other desiderative state or disposition to get its desiderative or motivational force. Here are some considerations anti-Humean interpreters might offer. They might appeal (and have appealed) to the fact that Aristotle recognises a distinctly rational type of desire, *boulêsis*, which non-rational creatures cannot possess. If the rationality of *boulêsis* is to be accounted for by it being grounded in deliberation (deliberation that is not itself dependent on some further non-deliberated desire) then Aristotle would appear to reject DO-DI, along the lines Nagel did when he introduced the notion of 'motivated desires',

that is, 'desires that are *arrived at* by decision and after deliberation' (1970, 29).²⁴ Again, anti-Humeans might point to the fact that Aristotle claims that the non-rational part of the soul is capable of 'listening to and obeying' reason (*EN* I 13; *EN* III 12; *EN* VII 6). Doesn't this suggest that reason can motivate? And once again, it might be argued that Aristotle thinks we can set components of our overall good by deliberation and be motivated accordingly (Irwin 1975).

These points, though, aren't conclusive. There might be other ways of explaining the rationality of *boulêsis* without them being grounded in deliberation. Perhaps Aristotle thinks that it is something about the end that these desires aim at that makes them only available to creatures that have *nous* and *logismos*, and hence appropriately labelled 'rational'. If so, then although one might need rational capacities to possess such desires, the desires themselves would not need to be construed as *generated* by a purely cognitive process.²⁵ This could undermine the non-rational part obeying/listening point as well: Aristotle might mean to refer commands stemming from motivational *boulêseis* – that count as rational in the sense of the end aimed at – without wishing to deny DO-DI by maintaining that an undiluted process of reasoning can resist a non-rational impulse. Finally, even if Aristotle thinks that we can deliberate about components of our overall good and be motivated accordingly (and against this, see e.g. Moss 2014, 223-4), this still might not involve him rejecting DO-DI. For it may be that in order for this deliberation to be motivationally efficacious it needs to draw on existing desires and desiderative dispositions the agent already possesses. The deliberation might not, that is, create *ex nihilo*, desiderative states, but instead channel, shape and make determinate, existing ones. Alternatively put, the deliberation may have to be embedded in

²⁴ Interestingly, Nagel cites Aristotle's discussion of deliberation in *EN* III 3 as being a place where it was 'pointed out before' that such desires exist. Irwin (1975, 571) calls such desires 'deliberated desires'.

²⁵ See Pearson (2012, Ch. 7), Grönroos (2015b). Strictly, even the notion that *some* *boulêseis* were formed through deliberation might seem to support the anti-DO-DI reading. But this would require that there wasn't any other desiderative force involved prior to the deliberation (see my response to the third anti-Humean consideration above) and yet *boulêsis* seems to be what is setting the end that is being deliberated about in the first place (*EN* III 5, 1113b3-5; *EE* II 10, 1226a11-14; cf. *EE* II 11, 1227b36-37) and so it is hard to see the deliberation as undiluted with desire, even if it channels and helps form a new desire.

appropriate desiderative states in order to make a motivational difference. In this respect, we might note that in *De Motu Animalium* Aristotle characterises practical reasoning in terms of premises pertaining to the good and premises pertaining to the possible (7, 701a11-25), and clearly thinks of the former as identifying a desired end (an *orekton*) (MA 6, 700b23-29).

From the other side, it is natural for the Humean interpreter to appeal to Aristotle's emphasis on *character*. In *EN* VI 2, he writes:

The origin (ἀρχή) of action – its efficient, not its final cause – is preferential choice, and that of preferential choice is desire (ὄρεξις) and reasoning (λόγος) with a view to an end (ὁ ἕνεκά τινος). This is why preferential choice cannot exist either without intellect and thought or without an ethical state (διὸ οὔτ' ἄνευ νοῦ καὶ διανοίας οὔτ' ἄνευ ἠθικῆς ἐστὶν ἔξωθεν ἢ προαίρεσις); for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of thought and character (εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἄνευ διανοίας καὶ ἠθους οὐκ ἔστιν). (1139a31-34)

Preferential choice requires both reasoning with a view to an end *and* a desire. It cannot, that is to say, exist without both intellect and thought, the reasoning side, and an ethical state, the desiderative side. And here Aristotle traces the desiderative side of this equation back to the agent's character. Just as reasoning with a view to an end stems from intellect and thought, so too the desires that in part explain our preferential choices (and so actions) can themselves be traced back to our characters. Occurrent desires, on this understanding of Aristotle's view, stem from more basic desiderative dispositions we formed earlier.²⁶ The Humean interpreter may take this to support the DO-DI reading. When pressed on why an occurrent desire has formed in a particular circumstance, the advocate of DO-DI will typically appeal to more basic desiderative states and character traits the agent possesses.²⁷

²⁶ Characters are dispositions to act and feel; see e.g. *EN* II 5.

²⁷ Hence the need for 'desiderative dispositions' in the formulation of DO-DI. The advocate of DO-DI will appeal to the rich habituation and development of one's desiderative dispositions through the processes of growing up (and continuing to live).

However, simply witnessing Aristotle tracing desires back to character is not going to be sufficient to secure the DO-DI reading, and for three reasons. First, given what we've just noted about the relation between character and *phronesis*, we will need to know whether or not when Aristotle refers to character he has in mind character virtue 'in the strict sense', since if he does, that notion of character virtue will not easily help us work out whether or not he accepts DO-DI: character virtue in the strict sense requires a full complement of rational capacities and so it won't be obvious whether cognitions themselves brought about the desires implied by such a state or not.²⁸ Second, Aristotle evidently thinks that some people are motivated to act in a way that *doesn't* match their character dispositions. One can, as he puts it, act unjustly, without being unjust (*EN* V 6, 1553a17-23; applied to akratic agents at *EN* VII 8, 1151a10).²⁹ But then, if the support for the DO-DI reading is meant to be provided by appealing to Aristotle's emphasis on character, how are the motivations of such agents to be explained in a way that is compatible with that principle?³⁰ Third, and most simply, the appeal to character doesn't strictly entail the rejection of DO-DI in any event. Even if Aristotle traces motivation back to character, he could also maintain that those character states were *in turn* formed in response to beliefs or other cognitive states the agent possesses.

The *EN* VI 2 passage is perhaps more suggestive than the *phronesis* passages, in so far as Aristotle specifically considers the roles of desire and thought in action and so would not naturally be construed as having 'character in the strict sense' (which entails *phronesis*, see next note) in mind.

²⁸ Just as *phronesis* requires character virtue, so too virtue in the strict sense requires *phronesis* (*EN* VI 12, 1144b30-32; VI 13, 1144b19-21; VI 13, 1144b26-28).

²⁹ For discussion of this idea, see Pearson 2006.

³⁰ Moss says something puzzling at this point. In spite of generally defending the view that character sets the end, she suddenly allows that reason *can* set the goal for akratic and enkratic agents, but insists that this is not how we are meant to get our values 'by nature' (2014, 240n.26). If this were true, then Aristotle would *reject* HTM: reason *can* bring about motivation on its own. The irony would be that it can only do so with *conflicted* agents, not unconflicted ones. The advocate of the HTM reading of Aristotle would, I think, be better off maintaining that even these actions that are apparently out of character can be traced to aspects of the agent's character, *when suitably specified*. Granted the agent doesn't have the character of someone who is fully unjust, but still her character is *such that* she can succumb to temptation on occasion and be led astray.

In this respect, perhaps more suggestive for the advocate of the DO-DI reading is the following passage from *EN* VII 8:

... virtue and vice respectively preserve and destroy the first principle (ἀρχή), and in actions that-for-the-sake-of-which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) is the first principle, as the hypotheses are in mathematics; neither in that case is it reason (λόγος) that teaches the first principles, nor is it so here – virtue either natural or produced by habituation is what teaches right opinion about the first principle (ἀρετὴ ἢ φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀρχήν). (1151a15-19)³¹

Natural virtue and vices are possessed by non-rational animals and children from birth. Equally, ‘habituated virtue’, here, presumably doesn’t mean ‘virtue in the strict sense’, since it is said to *teach us* right belief (*orthodoxa*) about the first principle. (In any event, there is evidently space, on Aristotle’s account, between the states we are born with, on the one hand, and the states that we acquire by habituation but before we acquire full rational capacities, on the other.) If Aristotle traces motivation back to character states that are not belief-based then this would suggest that he would reject DO-DI. No doubt when rational capacities emerge in humans, such capacities will ‘shape’ and ‘mould’ these desiderative states in significant ways, but it seems reasonable to think that Aristotle holds that the desiderative force, as we might say, that is then shaped and moulded by further reasoning is there already (and so reasoning capacities don’t *generate* desires as such).

In fact, though, even the idea that Aristotle thinks that our motivations can ultimately be traced back to non-belief-based habituated virtues wouldn’t itself rule out some kind of broadly cognitivist reading of Aristotle’s account of motivation. Indeed, this is a respect where reflection on Aristotle’s views might help

³¹ Moss (2011; 2012, 157) also appeals to this. Also important is *EE* II 11, 1227.22-25, which claims that there is no *logos* or reasoning about the goal. These seem more effective than some of the other ‘goal passages’ (as Moss terms them) which involve a contrast with *phronesis* (*EN* VI 12, 1144a7-9; VI 13, 1145a4-6) for the reasons I’ve given above. The *EN* VII 8 passage, and the *EE* II 11 passage just mentioned, need contrasting with the *Metaphysics* Λ passage I discuss below.

contribute the contemporary debates. Just suppose, for the sake of argument, that he rejects the view that beliefs can generate desires *ex nihilo* and instead holds (as suggested by the above passage) that our goals are at some level set by natural or non-belief-based habituated virtue. Would that mean that he rejects DO-DI?

In fact, it might depend on how we formulate that principle. In his original ‘How to argue ...’ paper, Wallace formulated DO-DI as follows:

DO-DI (Wal): ‘[the] processes of thought that gives rise to a desire (as ‘output’) can always be traced back to a further desire (as ‘input’), one which fixes the basic evaluative principles from which the rational explanation of motivation begins’. (1990, 370)

Neil Sinhababu formulates the principle as follows:

DO-DI (Sin): ‘Desires can be changed as the conclusion of reasoning only if a desire is among the premises of the reasoning’. (2009, 465)

The emphasis in these formulations on the ‘process of thought’ and the ‘conclusion of reasoning’ suggests that these versions of DO-DI only apply to belief-based or reason-based thinking, such that if a desire were set by a state that *wasn’t* grounded in a belief or a process of thought or in reasoning then it would automatically satisfy DO-DI. But this invites the question of what DO-DI was intended to rule out. It was certainly intended to rule out the idea that a process of undiluted reasoning or deliberation could on its own generate desires. But ruling that out doesn’t rule out some more broadly cognitivist reading of motivation, according to which motivational states are explanatorily downstream of cognitions more generally. In fact, Aristotle helps us to see just this point. In *An.* III 10, he writes:

... that which produces movement ... is first of all the object of desire (*orekton*); for this produces movement without being moved, by being thought of or grasped through *phantasia* (τῷ νοηθῆναι ἢ φαντασθῆναι) ... (*An.* III 10, 433b10-12)

In order for an agent to possess a desire she must grasp some object of desire, and so some desirability feature, through either thought *or phantasia*. But the latter, which can roughly be thought of as a quasi-

perceptual construal, is certainly cognitive. It is, we might say, cognitive, but not thought-based. It shares the same direction of fit as other cognitive states (belief, perception) (and hence Aristotle groups all such states together as *kritika* – discriminative) but doesn't require reasoning. And its inclusion here as a cognitive state that can grasp (at least some) desirability features enables Aristotle to explain animal desire (which is important for him in *An.* III 9-10, since his account of locomotion is meant to apply to all animals, not just human beings) and our perception-based desires.³²

Now, suppose we take it that the crux of HTM is to insist that two fundamentally different types of mental state are required to explain motivation, cognitive and conative. If so, we shall want to formulate DO-DI in terms of *cognitions broadly construed*, rather than in terms of belief, reasoning or deliberation - as indeed I did at the beginning of this paper. Now, of course, broadening DO-DI in this way will put a different slant on Nagel's worry about adopting HTM that we mentioned then as well. Recall, rejecting HTM was thought by some (mistakenly in my view) to be necessary for prudential and moral realism. For we have a chance, at least, of reasoning with you to change your *viewpoint*, whereas if there is an ineliminable desiderative element to motivation, it may seem, as Nagel wrote, that 'if one lacks the relevant desire, there is nothing more to be said' (1970, 28). But note that even if a broadly cognitivist account of motivation is correct, this wouldn't now entail that we could, even in principle, *reason* you into changing your viewpoint (and so motivation). For, just as a snake phobic may not be able to stop *seeing* a snake as dangerous, in spite of accepting the argument that it isn't, so too our *phantasia*-based construals may not be responsive to such reasoning. Nonetheless, motivation will be taken to be explanatorily downstream if not of our evaluative *beliefs*, at the very least of our perception-based construals, and even if we can't *reason* you into a change of motivation, effecting a change in motivation would still be a matter of getting

³² I explore Aristotle's notion of perception-based desire and contrast it with the contemporary account provided by Scanlon (1998) in my 2011a.

you to see things differently.³³ Just as a course of cognitive therapy might enable the snake phobic to stop seeing the snake as dangerous, so too with moral matters.

Relatedly, on the view we are considering by drawing from *EN* VII 6, all the desires we form prior to developing rational capacities would be explanatorily downstream of certain perceptual-based *phantasiai*.³⁴ And this, of course, would naturally invite questions about what part *we* play in habituating ourselves into such states, given that we are not fully rational at the time. But even if a large part of this goes down to our upbringing (and hence Aristotle's emphasis on such), that would still be compatible with a broad cognitivist reading. Educators could, in effect, and whether they realise it or not, be seeking to make us *see* things a certain way, such that the motivations would then ensue.

But what about natural virtues and vices? Aristotle thinks we possess natural virtues *at birth*. Doesn't this provide a clear instance in which desiderative states (those embodied in such traits) are not explanatorily downstream of cognitions? In fact, even that is not clear-cut. It could be that Aristotle would ultimately explain natural virtues and vices in terms of tendencies to see things a certain way, such that motivation ensues. If so, that would again be compatible with a broad cognitivist reading (a reading that sees him as rejecting DO-DI).

³³ Cf. McDowell 1978, 21.

³⁴ This, in fact, is Moss's reading of Aristotle, as that is spelled out in her 2011 and 2012 (e.g. 158ff). Although she holds that Aristotle thinks *reason* cannot set ends, nonetheless, she does allow that we desire ends because they 'quasi-perceptually' appear good to us (2011, 254). This makes her view squarely *anti-Humean* by my lights, not 'quasi-Humean' as she states in her 2014. Indeed, in her 2011, she refers to her reading as 'non-Humean non-Rationalism' (251). Her ground, though, for accepting this version of anti-Humeanism seems rather weak to me. She simply appeals to the fact that *boulēsis*, 'a special and distinctively human species of desire' is 'for the good, or at least what appears to one to be good' (2011, 251). If we could establish anti-Humeanism simply by appealing to the fact that desires have objects or involve seeing things a certain way, we could have saved ourselves a lot of trouble. But, of course, we can't. The question is whether we desire because we cognise the thing as good, such that the cognition explains or brings about the desire, or whether the desire is explanatorily basic, such that, even if it essentially involves some cognition, it isn't to be explained as derivative of that cognition or generated by it.

Rather than pursue this, let us instead turn to look at things from the other side. Can the anti-Humean interpreter actually offer an argument *in favour* of her reading? This reader, recall, is looking for a clear indication that Aristotle thinks a cognitive state can bring about a desire without tapping into a prior desiderative disposition. Here's an argument for that conclusion I'd like to try out. In the *An.* III 10 passage just quoted, Aristotle claims that what *first of all* (πρῶτον πάντων) moves us is the object of desire, since this moves us without being moved, by being thought of or grasped through *phantasia*. The fact that the motivating content here is cognitive doesn't *itself* entail the rejection of DO-DI (and so support an anti-Humean reading). For it could be that even though the content that the agent is motivated by is cognitive content, that content will not be able to motivate the agent unless she desires it, whereby it is the desiring that makes the cognitive content light up as motivating. But, in fact, matters are a bit more complicated, since the priority in question does seem to be explanatory. Aristotle goes on to write:

that which produces movement is twofold, that which is unmoved and that which produces movement. That is which is unmoved is the practical good, and that which produces movement and is moved is the faculty of desire (for that which is moved is moved in so far as it desires, and desire as actual is a form of movement). (433b14-18)

Desire, it seems, is actualised by the agent grasping a practical good. The unmoved mover in the practical case is the object of desire. And yet, it seems, it is our *grasping that* object of desire through some cognitive capacity that actualises the desire. Of course, Aristotle thinks that we can't have a desire without grasping some object of desire, and perhaps he thinks that we can't grasp an object of desire without desiring it. But he does at least seem to recognise an *explanatory* priority here. The unmoved mover (the object of desire) 'first of all' moves us in the sense that this is where the explanation of movement reaches its terminus. The unmoved mover can be said to move the moved mover (the *orektikon*) and the moved mover can be said to be moved by the unmoved mover and, in turn, itself move something else (the

animal). Since it is our *cognising* the unmoved mover that enables the latter to actualise the moved mover, it appears that cognitions of value have at least an *explanatory* priority for Aristotle over desire.³⁵

Promising though it may seem, the argument is inconclusive. The passage only strictly asserts the explanatory priority of the *object of desire* over *desire*, not the explanatory priority of *cognising the object of desire* over *desire*, and so leaves open the precise relation between the latter two. The desire reading could exploit this and say the passage is compatible with the claim that cognising the object of desire *simply is* desiring it. Equally, the DO-DI reading could exploit it and maintain that the passage is compatible with the claim that cognising the object of desire only in part makes up (but is not identical with) desiring, which DO-DI can accommodate.

However, all is not lost, since there is some indication elsewhere that Aristotle would flesh out the explanatory priority in a way that *would* involve him rejecting DO-DI. In *Metaphysics* Λ 7 Aristotle again makes his claim about the object of desire being an unmoved mover:

since that which moves is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved ... the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way, they move without being moved.
(1072a24-27)

But a few lines later Aristotle draws the conclusion that wasn't explicitly stated in *An.* III 10, at least for thought-based desire. He states (in Ross's translation):

desire is consequent on opinion rather than opinion on desire, for thinking is the starting-point
(ὁρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ διότι ὁρεγόμεθα: ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἡ νόησις). (1072a29-30)

This passage suggests we *can*, after all, fill out *An.* III 10 as stating that cognising the object of desire is *explanatorily* prior to desiring. And that looks like an argument in favour of thinking that Aristotle rejects

³⁵ Shields (2016, 362) misreads 433b13-18. That 'by which' motion is initiated (433b14) isn't, as Shields claims, the faculty of desire. It is instead the 'instrument through which desire produces movement', namely, 'something bodily' (433b19). And, contra Shields, the passage does indeed divide 'that which produces movement' into two, viz. an unmoved mover – the practical good, and a moved mover, the faculty of desire.

DO-DI. Desire is consequent upon (διότι) belief (belief here – but presumably the argument would apply to cognition more generally)³⁶ because the *archê*, the first point we trace everything back to in our explanation, is an unmoved mover. The unmoved mover in the practical case is the object of desire. And yet it is our *grasping that* through some cognitive capacity that actualises the desire. Of course, Aristotle thinks we can't have a desire without grasping some object of desire and, as noted, it may well be the case that he thinks we can't grasp an object of desire without desiring it. But he does seem to recognise an *explanatory* priority here. The unmoved mover (the object of desire) is what 'first of all' moves us in so far as this is where the explanation of movement reaches its terminus. The unmoved mover moves the moved mover (the *orektikon*). The moved mover is moved by the unmoved mover and itself moves something else (the animal). Since it is our *cognising* the unmoved mover that enables it to actualise the moved mover, it seems that cognitions of value have at least an *explanatory* priority for Aristotle over desire. This seems the strongest argument yet that Aristotle would reject HTM, via rejecting DO-DI.

Doubtless further considerations and passages would need to be adduced to support and bolster this, but those will have to wait for another occasion. My chief goal in this paper has been to investigate Aristotle's views with respect to HTM. In clearly setting out the commitments of HTM we can see what might count as a germane consideration one way or the other. For Aristotle to reject HTM, he must reject at least one of three principles: MO-DI, No B-Ds, or DO-DI. The Humean interpreter needs to show that Aristotle is plausibly thought of as committed to all three of these principles. The anti-Humean interpreter needs to show us conclusively that he rejects at least one of them. The goal going forward will be to attempt to establish the answer conclusively one way or the other. The goal is worth pursuing too, since it will have a bearing on our most fundamental understanding of Aristotle's ethical enterprise, from his account of habituation and upbringing, through to his account of practical reasoning, through to his

³⁶ Moss (2012, 4 and n4) seems to wish to translate *dokein* here in a way that would be consonant with her view, namely, as 'seems'. But that we have *noesis* in the second clause unequivocally specifies *dokein* as reason-based. And the context of the passage dictates this too.

prudential and moral realism. It will also have a bearing on the debate Moss and others have been having concerning HTR (unsurprisingly, if HTM and HTR aren't truly independent of each other, as suggested in section I above). In particular, the considerations adduced in considering DO-DI seem germane to that discussion and the final denial of DO-DI would look to provide a sense in which reason can 'set' ends for Aristotle. Finally, working out Aristotle's view in this area may also have a bearing on current philosophical debates as well, as we have also seen at various points (for example, in the introduction and consideration of 'persires' and in the formulation of DO-DI).

Appendix on *De Anima* III 7

In section 2.2, I noted that in support of his *besire/persire* reading of Aristotle David Charles appeals to *An. III 7*. A full discussion of the relevant parts of *An. III 7* would require a paper on its own, so in this Appendix I shall of necessity have to be fairly schematic. My aim is simply to argue that Charles' reading is not required of us. If the considerations I advanced in 2.2 also prompt us to think that Aristotle accepts the No B-Ds principle, they would provide further indirect support for my reading (or any reading that doesn't commit Aristotle to *besires/persires*).

Here is a key passage from *An. III 7* that should serve for our purposes:

[A] ... to perceive is like bare expressing or understanding; but when the object is pleasant or painful, [the perceptual soul], as if affirming or denying, pursues or avoids [the object]. [B] To feel pleasure or pain is to be active with the perceptual mean towards what is good or bad as such. Aversion and desire, with respect to their actualisation (*ἡ κατ' ἐνέργειαν*), are the same [as this] (*ταυτό*). [C] The capacity of desire and the capacity of aversion are not different, either from one another or from the faculty of sense-perception, but their being is different. (431a8-14).³⁷

³⁷ There is substantial discussion of the passage in Whiting (2002), Charles (2006) and Corcilius (2011). There are also shorter treatments in e.g. Modrak (1987, 141) Wedin (1988, 110-113), Tuozzo (1994, 535-6), Lorenz (2006, 139-140), and Gregoric (2007, 114-115). Hicks (1907, 527-530), Ross (1961, 303-304), Hamlyn (1968, 145-146) and Polansky (2007, 483-487) provide

Charles claims that Aristotle here commits himself to the following identity claims:

- (1) perceiving A as pleasant = being pleasurable affected by A.
- (2) being pleasurable affected by A = sensually desiring A
- (3) perceiving A as pleasant = sensually desiring A

On Charles' view, this means that for Aristotle:

perceiving A as pleasant, being pleasurable affected by A and desiring A are not distinct types of activity, instances of one occurring after instances of the other. Rather, there is just one type of activity which can be described in three different ways. (2006, 21)

The relevant part of this, for my purposes, is the equation of perceiving A as pleasant with sensually desiring A. For this, in my terminology, is to commit Aristotle to persires.

Without addressing potential philosophical difficulties with this view, I simply want to offer an alternative reading.³⁸ [A] clearly doesn't commit us to persires, since Aristotle could mean that when the object is cognised as pleasant or painful a further state of desire arises in response. But what about [B]? Doesn't this assert that desire and aversion are the same as some kind of (pleasurable or painful) perceptual activity, as Charles suggests? The key to resisting Charles' reading, as I see it, is the ἡ κατ' ἐνέργειαν which Charles takes to refer to the activity of the desire (he translates it: 'as far as the activity itself goes'). This signification follows the model of the way seeing is related to sight: when the capacity to see is actualised, seeing takes place. But Aristotle provides another model, instanced by the art of building, or the medical art. In such cases, the actualisation can either be thought of as the exercise of the capacity (in which case it would be analogous to the way in which seeing is the actualisation of sight) or, alternatively, the end product of it, what the successful execution of the activity results in. As Aristotle puts it: 'from the art of building there results a house as well as the process of building' (*Metaph.* Θ 8,

commentary. We also have e.g. ancient commentaries by Simplicius(?) and Philoponus, and the mediaeval commentary of Aquinas.

³⁸ See my 2011b, 168, for some discussion.

1050a26-27). So too, the successful actualisation of the medical art is either healing or health. My suggestion is that when Aristotle claims that desire (ἡ) κατ' ἐνέργειαν, is the same as sensory pleasure, he means the realised desire or aversion in the sense in which the actualisation of the capacity to build can be thought of as e.g. a house, and the actualisation of the medical art can be thought of as health. He is, that is, referring to the realisation or fulfilment of the desire or aversion, rather than the simple activity of the capacity. On this reading, Aristotle is only claiming that a fulfilled sensory desire is the same as pleasure or that a realised aversion is the same as pain. He hasn't equated certain kinds of cognitive state (perceptions as pleasant) with certain kinds of desiring (sensually desiring), he has simply noted that a fulfilled sensory desire *just is* a sensory pleasure. If I fulfil my desire for an ice-cream, the fulfilment is the pleasure of eating the ice-cream. But that leaves the distinction between cognitive and conative states intact.

Now turn to [C]? Doesn't Aristotle here assert the identities that Charles highlights? The key to this is to grasp what Aristotle might mean in this context by things being 'the same, but different in being'. Aristotle claims that two things are the same but different in being if they are the same in some respect but have different accounts. An example he provides in *Physics* III 3 is that the road from Thebes to Athens is the same as the road from Athens to Thebes, but not the same in being (202b14-16) (as an example of two things that are the same in account he suggests 'raiment' (λῶπιον) and 'dress' (ἱμάτιον)). Clearly the roads are the same spatio-temporal entity (so that if you are on one, you are always also on the other), even though they have different accounts (one gets you to Thebes, the other to Athens). Here then is one case, but Aristotle also uses the phrase 'same but different in being' even if the items said to be the same are not co-extensive, but one is just a subset of the other. A clear case of this is with Aristotle's notion of general justice. This type of justice picks out a subset of complete virtue (τελεία ἀρετή), namely, those that concern our relations to another (πρὸς ἕτερον) (*EN* V 1, 1129b26-27). And yet Aristotle is still happy to assert that justice in this sense and complete virtue are 'the same, but different in being' (V 1, 1130a12). His explanation is that 'what, as a relation to others, is justice is, as a certain kind of state without qualification, virtue' (*EN* V 1, 1130a12-13). A still different type of example is provided in *An.* II 12.

Aristotle claims that ‘that which perceives (τὸ αἰσθανόμενον)’ (i.e. the sense organ) is the same but different in being as the perceptual capacity (τὸ αἰσθητικόν) (424a25-26). These are not physically the same thing; indeed, Aristotle states that only one of them (the sense organ) is a physical magnitude (424a26-28), whereas the other is a certain *logos* and potentiality of that. Instead, they are ‘the same’, it seems, only in the sense that each actualisation of one is also, by that very fact, an actualisation of the other, and non-accidentally so (to see, for example, one exercises one’s perceptual capacity and in so doing employs one’s eyes).

The first two notions of sameness-but-difference-in-being might appear to suggest Charles’ reading of [C], since on those readings Aristotle would be saying that one and same activity can be described as desiring or perceiving (the difference between these two understandings of sameness-but-difference-in-being here would simply be that on the latter there could be an imperfect overlap, but nonetheless when they do overlap, they are one and the same, except in account). But what about the third understanding of same-but-different-in-being? On this reading, the capacity of (sensory) desire, the capacity of (sensory) aversion, and the capacity of perception are all ‘the same’, in the sense that manifestations of each of these capacities are manifestations of the capacity of perception. What would this amount to? [B] suggests that to feel pleasure or pain involves being active with the perceptual mean, but here the suggestion is not simply that *realised* desires and aversions can be considered manifestations of the capacity of perception (i.e. as being sensory pleasures and pains), but that desires and aversions *themselves* can be considered manifestations of the capacity of perception. Does that commit him to persires? I think not. All it requires is that *perceptual content* is involved in sensory desires. Insofar as sensory desires involve *sensing something as prospectively pleasant* they will involve manifestations of the perceptual capacity (mostly likely, the contents of *perceptual phantasia*),³⁹ and non-accidentally so. And, if the notion of sameness-but-difference-in-being is along the lines of the third example we considered of

³⁹ In *An. III 10* Aristotle claims that the capacity of desire is not possible without *phantasia*, and ‘all *phantasia* is either deliberative or perceptual (φαντασία δὲ πᾶσα ἢ λογιστικὴ ἢ αἰσθητικὴ)’ (433b28-30).

this, this need not imply that the perceptual content and the desire are one-and-the-very-same thing. Desire and aversion will essentially *involve* some kind of perceptual state - we can't have one without the other - but that wouldn't make them simply different ways of describing the same activity. Desires might be something over and above perceptual activities (namely, some kind of psychic pursuit). Analogously, the perceptual organ isn't just another way of describing the perceptual capacity but is something over and above that (for one thing, the former, but not the latter, is a physical magnitude).

Aristotle also claims in [C] that the capacity of desire and the capacity of aversion are the same as 'each other', but different in being. This need not mean that he thinks each desire can also sensibly be characterised as an aversion (i.e. a desire for *A* as an aversion to not-*A*). It could simply mean that psychic pursuits (desires) and avoidances (aversions) should be considered manifestations of the same underlying capacity, viz. being conatively affected by our environment. Analogously, to run towards something and to run away from something are manifestations of the same physical capacity.

Finally, it might be worth noting that while the *An. III 7* passage does not entail Charles' persire/besire reading of Aristotle, part [A] in that passage might naturally suggest the anti-Humean account I've tentatively advanced in this paper. While normal perception is like a simple expressing or intellectual grasping (φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν), when the object is pleasant or painful, the perceptual soul⁴⁰, as if making something akin to an assertion or denial, pursues or avoids the object in question. 'Pursuits' of the perceptual soul would look to be desires: at the level of the agent, to experience one's perceptual part as 'pursuing' something will presumably amount to feeling a perception-based desiderative response. But

⁴⁰ Although the subject is not expressed in the Greek, we do have feminine participles, καταφᾶσα/ἀποφᾶσα, with which the implied subject must agree. This rules out e.g. 'man' (ἄνθρωπος). 'Perception' (αἴσθησις) is a possibility (Hicks 1907, 527), so too is 'soul' (ψυχή) (Ross 1961, 303- 304; Hamlyn 1968, 63; Tuozzo, 1994, 535; Whiting 2002, 154; Lorenz, 2006, 139). However, later on in *An. III 7*, Aristotle develops a directly parallel account to the one above for 'the thinking soul' (ἡ διανοητική ψυχή) (431a14), which suggests that in our passage, where he is concerned with perception, he most likely has in mind 'the perceptual soul' (ἡ αἰσθητική ψυχή) (so too Charles 2006, 19).

note that Aristotle simply claims that *when* the object is pleasant, such a desire is formed. Presumably he means: when the object is grasped by the perceptual soul as one that is prospectively pleasant, the agent forms a desire for that object. If that is the right reading, a desiderative response would seem to be entailed simply by the agent cognising the object as pleasant.⁴¹ And that would seem to amount to a denial of DO-DI (and hence a denial of HTM).⁴²

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⁴¹ Cf. also *EN* VII 6, 1149a25-b3 and, for discussion, my 2011b.

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